

Sometimes I think about America (after looking at Life or The Saturday Evening Post) and it's like a foreign country. I never went to any of these American things: sock hops, drive-in movies, homecoming games, pajama parties. I might as well be reading National Geographic about Brazil. I never saw a cheerleader with pompons on her ass. I never got laid in a car. I used to look at Archie comics like they were science fiction. Archie and Judhead, Betty and Veronica, with those oxford shoes and school letters on short-sleeved sweaters: Where did all those kind of people live? Not where I lived. -Pete Hamill in **LOVING WOMEN**.

...the word Dixie came from New Orleans. The French word for ten was dix. And they had a ten-dollar (or franc?) bill with the word dix written on it and all those crazy men who worked on the Mississippi river would get drunk and say, *got to get down to New Awlins and get me some of them Dixies*.
-Pete Hamill in **LOVING WOMEN**.

THE CARTOONIST AS SAILOR-SUPERHERO

I tried to explain to Miles about being a cartoonist and Miles said he thought that if I had any talent at all, that was the way to waste it.

-Pete Hamill in **LOVING WOMEN**.

Though it is a typical potboiler, some of you might enjoy reading Pete Hamill's novel **LOVING WOMEN** because the lead character is an eighteen-year-old cartoonist with a penchant for Milton Caniff and Roy Crane. The protagonist makes some extra money by selling drawings of sailors and their wives and girl friends while he is stationed in Pensacola, Florida, in 1953. Ironical that the fine artist in this book rejects comic books and cartoons, yet this book is filled with the kinds of characters and situations that are the substance of most contemporary alternative comic books. **LOVING WOMEN** gives you an idea what it was like before the ascendance of underground and newwave comix. Had Hamill's young cartoonist come along in the mid-sixties he might have been doing posters for Bill Graham or Chet Helms. The book is in paperback.

C.G.

The convergence of the movies with both ads and cartoons makes sense, because the ad and the cartoon each present a fantasy of perfect wish fulfillment: that is, wish fulfillment that seems both immediate and absolute, arising, on the one hand, from a purchase (which will make life perfect *now*) or, on the other hand, from the animated spectacle itself (in which the universe appears responsive to one's wishes). This effect has been compounded in the movies, which now purvey a wish-fulfillment fantasy as extreme as, and far more compelling than, any Coke spot or Tom and Jerry free-for-all.

Mark Crispin Miller
HOLLYWOOD THE AD
ATLANTIC MONTHLY 4/90



VIDIOTIC

Television has equipped us as citizens to live only in an all-consuming--and thereby forgettable and disposable--present, blissfully unaware of the historical tides and movements that speak not only to this moment, but to our vast future. Television offers Americans nearly the same thing everywhere...on dozens of clone-like channels, conferring a kind of cultural peerage on a small group of commentators. Issues and ideas are merely pushed around the plate, never digested, by the same people...engaged more with a subtle one-upmanship among themselves and their to alter egos than with the advancement of our understanding. In the worst of our television, we are addicted to personality, to the breathless embrace of celebrity, ensuring as we go a tyranny of the televised over the great mass of the untelevised.

-Ken Burns

I have been on television several times in my career and each time I had something I wanted to say to whoever was out there listening and each time I found myself fit into a preconceived pattern determined by the format of the show. I didn't get to say what I had intended at all. I got a few short lines in relation to what the director wanted to say with the entire program. I do not blame the people on whose shows I appeared. I was just a part of the whole known only to them. The first time I thought it would be great to be on television, to watch the great me up there spouting off. I even expected to get some mail about the show. I didn't get a single piece of mail. I learned a lot watching the entire show, mainly that I didn't like being a part of anyone else's scene. I had long known that or I would not have started this personal newsletter. I would have gone on writing columns for other people's fanzines.

What I learned was that tv does what it does no matter who is sitting in the chair, no matter who is reading the questions off the prompter. People become addicted to tv and they watch the tube no matter who or what is on it. The loners have it on from their morning coffee until they pass out in the wee small hours of the next morning. I read a biography of Johnny Carson recently and when I finished I thought *this man thinks people watch him, but those same people were watching Steve Allen and Jack Paar long before he moved into the Tonight slot and they will be watching whoever replaces him*. I only watch tv indiscriminately when I go to

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Nebraska to visit my mother. She is an addict, though always in denial. If I turn off the set, it is back on in a few minutes, because she just wants to see who Oprah or someone has on or she wants to watch the weather. All day long my mother watches a succession of soap operas and game shows and news clips and when there is nothing on she has umpteen video tapes of old sitcoms that she watches over and over. She does not watch the Tonight Show, because she is still mad at Ed McMahon for telling her she was one of the few chosen to win a million dollars. She knows nothing about computers and was truly surprised to find that a number of other ladies in her condo were also winners in the making. I haven't watched the Tonight show in years, mainly because I can only take a little bit of stand-up comedy and when I do watch comedy I want something a lot snappier than Carson's tired-out celeb jokes. For awhile I was watching Letterman, but the format has become a predictable as Carson. I enjoy Letterman's stunts, but to get to them you have to wade through so much crapola, it's not worth the eyestrain. I hate all that jiveass rah rah stuff that is used to open most of the talk shows. I'm not against applauding or cheering when there is something worth the accolade, but most of what happens on these shows is hype for lame products.

-Clay Geerdes

PROTECTING SOURCES

...during World War II Prime Minister Winston Churchill decided that British towns and villages about to be bombed by the Nazis could not be warned in advance because that might signal to the Germans that their secret codes had been broken. If warned of an impending attack, British citizens would of course take defensive action; they would scramble for shelters. German spies would certainly pick this up, and their codes would immediately be changed, thereby setting back Britain's overall war effort. Churchill and other British leaders simply had to swallow hard and accept the fate of the bombing raids because the alternative would be even more disastrous.
Wolf Blitzer
TERRITORY OF LIES, 1989.

I should have known better than to watch THE DREAMER OF OZ, but I like John Ritter and I thought he would do more than walk through the part. Lyman Frank Baum was a creative man with incredible energy. In his 64 years, he started businesses, edited papers, fathered four sons, wrote over a hundred books, many of them under pseudonyms, and made films of several of his favorite OZ stories. His mother-in-law, Mathilda Gage, read his earliest stories, liked them, and encouraged him to try to publish them. DREAMER manages to deal with the life of Baum in a stream of sentimental scenes, some of them so poorly contrived as to make the viewer want to kick in the tube. It you're not a mindless clod, you hate having your emotions manipulated and this amateurish film not only manipulates again and again but degenerates to the totally maudlin at the point of Baum's death. Ritter makes this incredible man seem like a total schlemiel with a nagging wife and a disapproving mother-in-law. The Baums' life is wrenched into the mundane structure of a cheap melodrama. One would think from this that the man had no friends at all and the truth is he was surrounded by companions all his life.

I don't know who did the research on this turkey, but one would think anyone could look up the facts about Baum. Hell, a call to any of the many chapters of the various Oz societies would have answered all the questions. Relax, I am not going to list all of the errors here, but let me share one example of the thoughtlessness of this film with you. Baum has been onstage during the performance of a melodrama in which he was acting and a tired actor torched the backdrop and set the theater on fire. Everyone hurries outside. Baum and his wife, Maud, are out in the crowd. She picks that moment to tell him she is pregnant and he is excited. He laughs and picks her up and dances around--while the fire rages behind them. Do you believe the insensitivity and the stupidity of this? What would Baum or any human being be doing in a time of crisis like this? He would be in the theater trying to put the fire out and making sure his fellow actors were safe and trying to salvage some of the costumes and props that were their bread and butter. The people who directed this film have no conception of how people act during a crisis. A few scenes into DREAMER and they destroy Baum's character by portraying him as a silly clod who will dance around with his wife while his friends are in danger. Basically, whoever put this film together doesn't have the vaguest idea about how to create character on film.

Baum was an actor and he was always more passionate about staging his stories and filming them than he was about the writing. None of this figures in DREAMER. One would think that he flirted with the theater as a young man and forgot about it later. Not one, but five of his OZ stories were filmed, though the only one extant that I have seen is THE PATCHWORK GIRL OF OZ. Our local Pacific Film Archive has a copy.

As an OZ fan, I was pleased to hear that Baum was finally getting some recognition after being ignored for so long, but DREAMER is more defamation than praise and I am deeply disappointed as are I am sure other Ozmopolites. -Clay



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Ever notice how television heroes reinforce the authority of the government and the business elite--all those heroic cops, lawyers, judges, and soap op high rollers and all those snide putdowns of the déclassé--namely ordinary folks like you and me. What if the hero was a down and out Third World wino with AIDS or an overweight electrician with acne? Let me tell you, when we had the big Earthquake in 1989, the heroes who climbed up onto the collapsed freeway and pulled people out of their cars and got them down to safety were ordinary street dudes with their values intact and I've yet to see one movie of the week about these people.

I saw Madonna's latest bit of post-Warholian decadence, *Justify My Love*, and watched the Queen of Sleaze wasting a lot of time on Nightline justifying that slice of boring rot. Talk about inarticulate. I loved it when Madonna, looking like a plastic copy of Marilyn Monroe, countered Feminist criticism, saying she controlled her own career "and isn't that what feminism is all about?" What the show said to me is here is a woman who made over 26 million dollars last year and she has no more sense of style and decorum than to go on National television looking like a hooker. -C.G.

World of Fandom Magazine has published *The Official Rat Fink*, a collection of stories about Big Daddy Roth's infamous rodent illustrated in the grossest manner by Ric Sloane. \$3.25 should get you one from POB 9421, Tampa, FL 33604-9421.

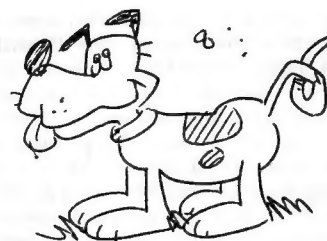


©Big Daddy Roth. 1991.

BEFORE LOTTO

Walt Wallet, star of the comic strip *GASOLINE ALLEY*, took a flier on ninety shares of stock in the fictitious Rubber Keyhole Corporation, and soon found himself wholly preoccupied with the gyrations of the market. He drew a graph to plot his stock's progress, and decided that when the black line crawls off the paper at the top, I'll sell. When Rubber Keyhole subsequently took a sharp nosedive, Walt consoled himself with the thought that it was only the big boys shaking off the pikers. I knew it was going to happen all the time. Just think how ignorant I was of all this three weeks ago, then when Rubber Keyhole righted itself and nearly doubled in value, Walt's friend Doc advised him to sell out while he could. Nobody ever went broke taking a profit. True enough, Walt conceded, but nothing ventured, nothing gained, and in the time-honored tradition of amateur investors everywhere, he decided to stick it out a little while longer; after all, it would be a shame to sell out before Rubber Keyhole reached its peak.

1929: THE YEAR OF THE GREAT CRASH
William K. Klingaman, 1989.



The latest TWISTED IMAGE is \$1/stamp from Ace Backwards, 1630 University Avenue, Apt. 26, Berkeley, CA 94703. Ace is a unique strip cartoonist, right on the mark with his social and political parodies. It is easy to see why he is not palatable to the Established syndicates. Ace even gets rejected by local papers, a sign of true genius!

Vaughn Bodé collectors may contact Barbara Bodé at POB 10143, North Berkeley, CA 94709.

Donations may be made to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund at POB 501, Princeton, WI 54968.

EL VIBORA 130 is \$8 pp from J. M. Berengueuer, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, Spain.

I see Rick Geary is illustrating one of my old faves, Henry George Wells' *THE INVISIBLE MAN* for First's Classics Illustrated #20. I'm really enjoying this new series, particularly since the printing and binding are so much better than the original series. The source of many a high school book report, they were.